



*ENGLISH NATIONAL
CHARACTER VS RUSSIAN
NATIONAL CHARACTER:
STEREOTYPES*

ABSTRACT

What are stereotypes? What about British National Character stereotypes and Russian National Character Stereotypes? Are stereotypes the truth or fiction?

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What is a stereotype?

The 21st century is already marked by great increase in communication between many different nations that make up modern community. Stereotypes are an essential part of this cross-cultural communication, providing individuals with stable, sometimes mythical, ideas about their native country and about the character of other nations.

Have you ever asked yourself what the World think about you just because you were born in a certain nation? Of course there is a variety of common national stereotypes about inhabitants of various nations, held by inhabitants of other nations. Such stereotypes are usually prejudicial and often ill-informed and overlap with ethnic or racial stereotypes. However, some stereotypes may be positive.

A stereotype is "a fixed, overgeneralized belief about a particular group or class of people." (Cardwell, 1996). In other words stereotyping is believing that people of a certain group, race or religion all have the same characteristics when they don't.

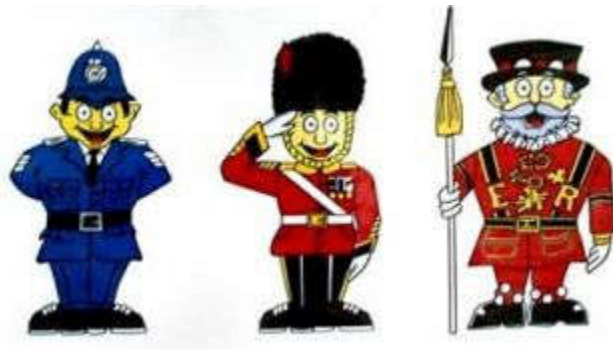
To give a more serious definition: "National Stereotype is a system of culture-specific beliefs connected with the nationality of a person. This system includes beliefs concerning those properties of human beings that may vary across nations, such as appearance, language, food, habits, psychological traits, attitudes, values etc."

National Character

The term "national character" is used to describe the enduring personality characteristics and unique life styles found among the populations of particular national states. This behavior is sometimes considered on an abstract level, that is, as cultural behavior without actual reference to necessarily different personality modalities. It may also be considered as motivated by underlying psychological mechanisms characteristic of given people.

British National Stereotypes

British people live in the UK. They are people who live in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. British people can also either be English, Scottish, Welsh, or Irish (from Northern Ireland only).



There are certain stereotypes of national character which are well-known in Britain.

The British are said to be reserved in manners, dress and speech. They are famous for their politeness, self-discipline and especially for their sense of humor. British people have a strong sense of humor which sometimes can be hard for foreigners to understand. "No hugs, dear. I'm British. We only show affection to dogs and horses." - Jocelyn Dashwood

On the other side, the Irish are supposed to be great talkers, the Scots have a reputation for being careful with money, the Welsh are renowned for their singing abilities, and the English are considered to be reserved. These characteristics are, of course, only caricatures and are not reliable description of individual people from these countries.

Individualism

The British have few living traditions and are too individualistic to have the same everyday habits as each other. They are rather proud of being different. However, this does not mean that they like change. They don't. They may not behave in traditional ways, but they like symbols of tradition and stability. The British are rather conservative and their conservatism can combine with their individualism. Why should they change just to be like everyone else? Indeed, as far as they are concerned, not being like everyone else is a good reason not to change. Their driving on the left-hand side of the road is a good example to this. Systems of measurement are another example. The British government has been trying for many years to get British people to use the same scales that are used nearly everywhere else in the world. But everybody in Britain still shops in pounds and ounces.



British are reserved

It is probably true that the British, especially the English, are more reserved than the people of many other countries. The British are reserved as already mentioned and they don't like speaking about themselves and their private life. They find it comparatively difficult to indicate friendship by open displays of affection. For example, it is not the convention to kiss when meeting a friend. Instead, friendship is symbolized by behaving as casually as possible. The most favorite topic for conversation is the weather, definitely. As this is impersonal topic. The British are always talking about the weather. Unlike many others, this stereotype is actually true to life. But constant remarks about the weather at chance meetings are not the result of polite conventions. They are not

obligatory. Rather, they are the result of the fact that, on the one hand, to ask personal questions would be rude while, at the same time, silence would also be rude. The weather is a very convenient topic with which to 'fill the gap'.



Personal Contacts and social life

British people give a relatively high value to the everyday personal contacts. Some writers on Britain have talked about the British desire 'to belong', and it is certainly true that the pub, or the working man's club, or the numerous other clubs devoted to various sports and pastimes play a very important part

in many people's lives. Many people make their social contacts through work and, partly as a result of this, the profession is also important aspect of their sense of identity. British people

try to appear as if they belong to as high class as possible, though nobody wants to be thought of as 'snobbish'. Going to the pub is the most popular leisure activity outside the home. Pubs are an important part of British life. People talk, eat, drink, meet their friends and relax there.

Chauvinism

The modern British are not really chauvinistic. Open hostility to people from other countries is very rare. If there is any chauvinism at all, it expresses itself through ignorance. Most British people know remarkably little about Europe and who lives there. The popular image of Europe seems to be that it is something to do with the French.



A Nation of Gardeners

The British are known as a nation of gardeners. Most people have a garden on their property. Gardening has been a popular pastime since Roman times. Many people in Britain are proud of their houses and gardens. They want their houses and gardens to look nice. Every town in Britain has one or more DIY (Do it Yourself)

centers and garden centers.



Sporting

The British love sport. Many of the world's famous sports began in Britain, including cricket, football, lawn tennis, golf and rugby. England's national sport is cricket although to many people football (soccer) is seen as British national sport. Football is British most popular sport. Some of England's football teams are world famous, the most famous being Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool.

British Home

There is an English saying "My home – my castle". The most popular type of home in England is semi-detached (more than 27% of all homes), closely followed by detached then terraced.



Animal lovers

Britain is famous for being a nation of animal lovers, and many people in Britain keep pets. More than 50 per cent of British families own a pet. Practically every family has a dog or a cat, or both. They have special dog shops selling food, clothes and other things for dogs. There are dog hairdressing saloons and dog cemeteries. Millions of families have 'bird-tables' in their gardens.

Perhaps, this overall concern for animals is part of the British love for nature.

The British keep some 7.7 million cats, 6.6 million dogs, one million budgerigars and 18 million goldfish.

Clothes and appearance

As per appearance, clothes and fashion the most common image people have of a typical Englishman is a man wearing a bowler hat, a pin striped suit, a newspaper under the arm and carrying a long unopen umbrella." The British are comparatively uninterested in clothes. They spend a lower proportion of their income on clothing than people in most European countries do. Many people buy second-hands clothes and are not at all embarrassed to admit this. Of course, when people are 'on duty', they have to obey some quite rigid rules. A male bank employee, for example, is expected to wear a suit with a tie at work. But on Sundays the British like to «dress down». They can't wait to take off their respectable working clothes and slip into something really scruffy. In fact, the British are probably more tolerant of strange' clothing than people in most other countries.

Food

British food is known to be tasteless. It has traditionally been based on beef, lamb, pork, chicken and fish and generally served with potatoes and one other vegetable. The most common and typical food eaten in Britain include the sandwich, fish and chips, pies like the Cornish pasty, trifle and roasts dinners. Some of British main dishes have strange names like Bubble & Squeak and Toad-in-the-Hole. The English like tea and drink it in all possible occasions: Tea solves everything. You're a bit cold? Tea. Your boyfriend has just left you? Tea. You've just been told you've got cancer? Tea.

Royal Family

The British are proud of their country, the Queen and Royal family.

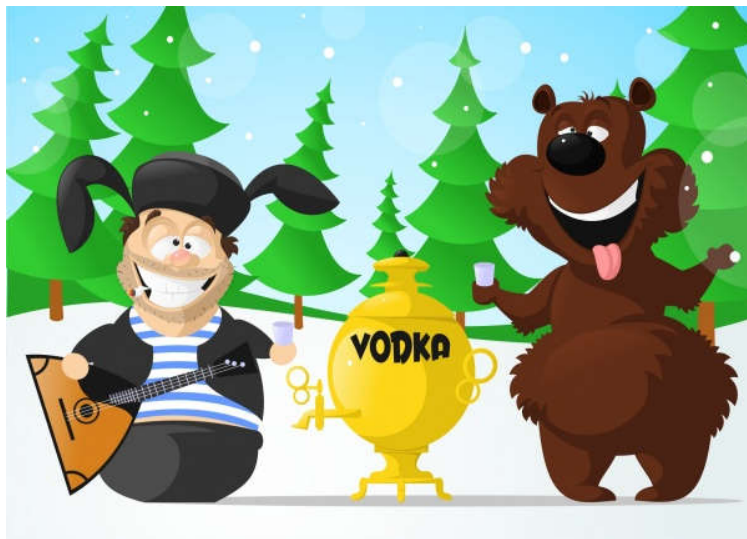
There also stereotypes of British humor. It is known everywhere that the British don't have sense of humor. But this is not true in fact.

Big Ben, Westminster Palace, London Bridge, Thames, Tower of London, royal family and Elizabeth are also a part of Britain's stereotypes, as well as oats porridge, tea, coffee, pubs and beer, rainy London and British fogs, Scotland's green hills and sheep, kilts and bagpipes.

Russian National Stereotypes.

In the beginning of this part of my project I want to say that all stereotypes described here are taken from western internet sources and I was quite shocked to read about all of them.

This is the main reason why I have written about all those stereotypes because they are partly strange, partly ridiculous, and partly negative and don't have any basement to survive from my point of view. But these stereotypes are alive and I am surprised.



Russians – aggressive; rude; big spenders; generous; open-minded; agreeable; love their “babushkas” and the last Czar; either spies or communists; alcoholics (primarily Stolichnaya vodka); mainly poor – with a few shiny billionaires who buy football clubs around the world (mainly in England); love ice hockey, gymnastics, wrestling, power lifting; live in the land of organized crime (the Russian Mafia is everywhere); overweight; threatening nuclear war;

want to invade with MIG fighter jets; ultra-orthodox Christians; love to secretly poison their enemies with uranium injections; warmongering similar to Americans.

These are few stereotypes about Russia. When foreigners talk about Russian stereotypes, often it is: Winter, Vodka and Bears and all mentioned above.

THE MOST COMMON RUSSIAN STEREOTYPES ARE:



- All the Russians are Soviets (that is probably by far the largest stereotype).
- All the Russian hate Americans.
- All the Russians are spies.
- There are only two seasons in Russia: winter, and nuclear winter

- Russia is the World's largest vodka republic
- Most of Russians do not drink water, only vodka.
- Russian women are gorgeous and they are available for sale throughout the internet and you can buy your own one as a souvenir (even if you haven't been to the country!)
- Russian food is bad even for British standards.
- Everyone know and sing the very popular song Katyusha.
- All the Russians play gymnastics, wrestling, boxes and have very large bodies.
- In Russia there is an organized crime (the rise of Russian and former Soviet mobsters with the collapse of the Soviet Union).

I would like to review some stereotypes in a more detailed form and from the point of view of a foreigner from Western Europe who has never been to Russia.

Russians are flashy

When Russian people dress up, they go all-out. Sky-high heels, glittery miniskirts and fur coats on impeccably made-up girls, the latest in crisp, bright or loud men's fashion on guys. When they're not dressing to go out, Russian men tend to tone it down and wear quiet clothing, but Russian women keep it dialed up, always seeming as though they've stepped out of a fashion magazine.

Gender roles are alive and well in Russia

Men are men and women are women in Russia in every aspect of daily life. Men are expected to be very traditionally chivalrous, opening doors, pulling out chairs, and paying for the ladies. Women are expected to cook, clean and always look gorgeous – and not act offended when they encounter these kinds of attitudes. I'm not saying it's easy, but that's the way it is!

There's a lot of corruption in Russia



If you get stopped by police for a random check in the Metro and don't have your passport with you, or even if you're stopped for a traffic violation, police will often offer you a choice between an official ticket (and jail time in some cases!) or paying them off, quite a large amount that increases in proportion to the severity of the crime. And that's just one example. Any Russian bureaucrat – actually, almost any employee – can be

bribed and often that's the only way to get things done.

Russians are blunt and serious

Russians always have a serious face on when they're in public. It is considered impolite to express strong (especially loud) emotions around strangers. (Of course, this all changes in private, but that's a different story.) Russian people are also very blunt and will not beat around the bush; they don't tolerate small talk or niceties and much prefer to get to the point of a conversation. Except for young (Americanized) people, you will never hear Russian people exchanging "how are you?" as they walk past each other on the street – this question is reserved for private conversations and demands an honest answer.

Russians are chain-smokers

Although the Russian government is slowly starting to impose harsh anti-smoking regulations in an attempt to end the smoking epidemic gripping the country, Russia still has one of the highest smoking rates in the world. Expect second-hand smoke to be practically inescapable on Russian streets.

Russians are superstitious

Russian people have a lot of "superstitions" that are mostly habits – like "knock on wood" is in many cultures. Many Russians will sit down inside their house before leaving for a trip to ensure a good journey; they will consider it good luck to break a glass accidentally, and they will spit three times over their shoulder after they knock on wood. Most people don't actually believe these things "work", but they always – always – do them anyway.



Russian babushkas

The babushka, or Russian granny, is a pervasive image in Western culture, and, good news – she exists! There are a lot of older women in Russia who look exactly like stereotypical "babushkas" – small and short with scarves around their heads.



Russian women are extremely beautiful

Walk down any street in any Russian city and you will see that this is absolutely true. Young Russian women are gorgeous, and they are very

particular about their appearance – most Russian women will not go outside without their hair and make-up perfectly done and their outfit, shoes and accessories perfectly matching. Even in winter, you will see many Russian women on the streets in the following outfit: short skirt, tights, heels, and a fur coat.



Russians love vodka

Almost all Russians are capable of drinking vodka like water, and most of them will always have a bottle in their house whether they drink it regularly or not. If you are ever at an event of any sort organized by Russian people, there will be vodka there, and it will be offered to you! It's not true, however, that Russians get extremely offended when you refuse a shot – it's more that

they're surprised, because to them it's not at all a big deal. But it does not mean that they are alcoholics – they can just drink more than most of other people!

While reading articles about Russia I was quite surprised because couldn't even realize that the situation is so awful. Most of people could say "Take it easy!" but I was shocked. I thought that Russia is Matreshkas, Babushkas, Shapka-Ushanka, Winter and Bear, and it seems that this is not true due to the internet point of view.

Today Russia is Vodka, Corruption, Thieves, Spies, Communists, Ladies for Sale, Russian Mafia, Winter and Bears.

Similarities.

In the end of the review of British National Character and Russian National Character stereotypes it is obligatory to say that despite all differences we've founded there are also some similarities.

British and Russians are gardeners. Either British or Russians like to work at countryside and to have a garden and plants from their estates. Russians have Dachas and also like to spend time in their gardens while British like to live in their own houses.

British and Russians are great drinkers of Alcoholic drinks. British drink beer in pubs and Russians like Vodka.

There is a stereotype that Russian food is very simple and not tasty. Here in Russia people say that British food is awful. And I should also say that I was talking to many people from other countries and Britain also and they like Russian food much.

Both British and Russians are superstitious I think.

Like all nations from the North part of the World, Russians and British are closed and not so open-minded as people from South. They are also not so impulsive.

Conclusion

A stereotype is a thought that can be adopted about specific types of individuals or certain ways of doing things. These thoughts or beliefs may or may not accurately reflect reality.

The main answer that was received after studying the topic is that stereotypes are often a fiction. Of course sometimes the truth is written, or partly the truth, but more often it is fiction.

Used links:

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